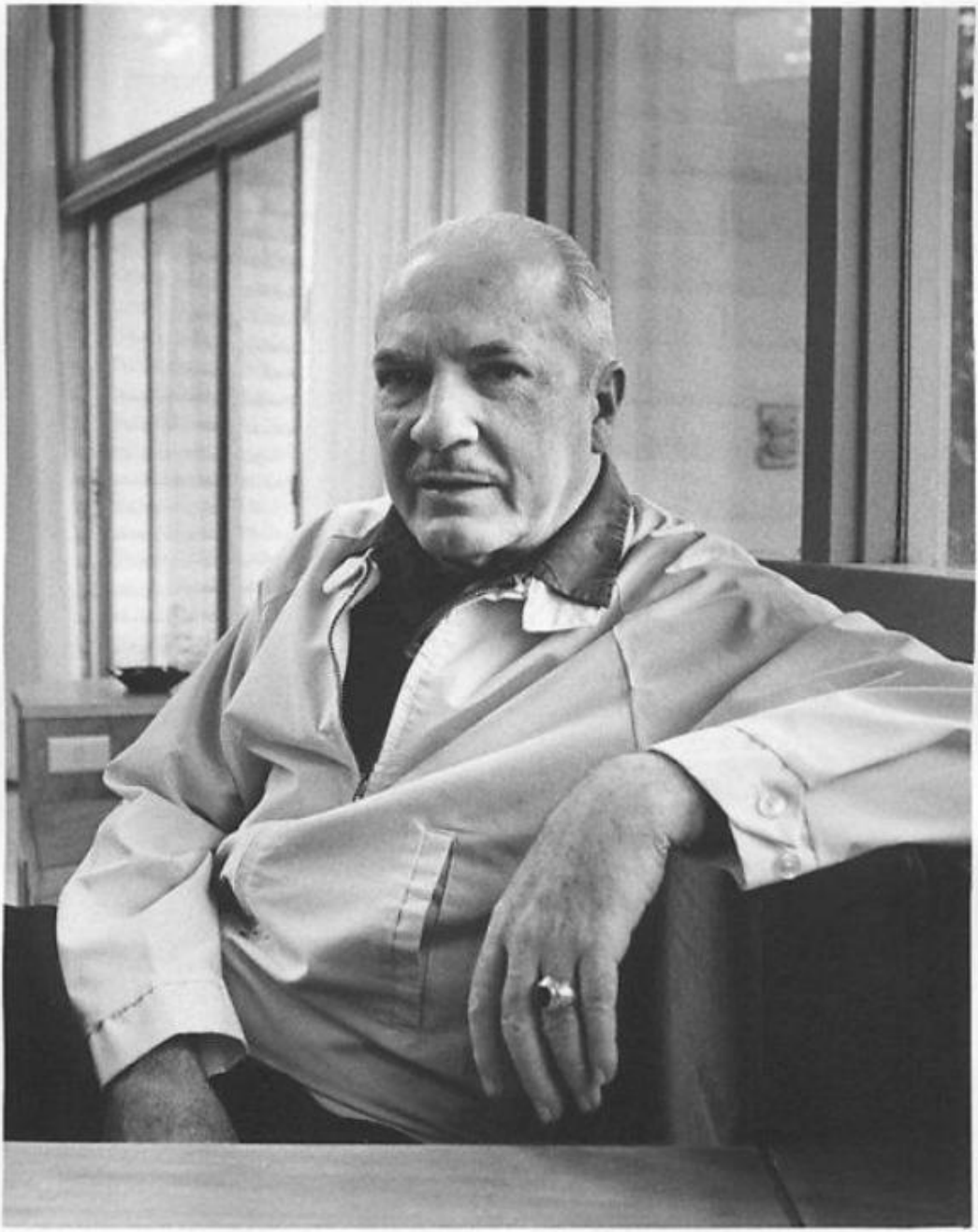

"It's Great to Be Back!"

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"HURRY UP, ALLAN!" Home-back to Earth again! Her heart was pounding.

"Just a second." She fidgeted while her husband checked over a bare apartment. Earth-Moon freight rates made it silly to ship their belongings; except for the bag he carried, they had converted everything to cash. Satisfied, he joined her at the lift; they went on up to the administration level and there to a door marked: LUNA CITY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION-Anna Stone, Service Manager.

Miss Stone accepted their apartment keys grimly. "Mr. and Mrs. MacRae. So you're actually leaving us?"

Josephine bristled. "Think we'd change our minds?"

The manager shrugged. "No. I knew nearly three years ago that you would go back-from your complaints."

"From my comp- Miss Stone, I've been as patient about the incredible inconveniences of this, this pressurized rabbit warren as anyone. I don't blame you personally, but-"

"Take it easy, Jo!" her husband cautioned her.

Josephine flushed. "Sorry, Miss Stone."

"Never mind. We just see things differently. I was here when Luna City was three air-sealed Quonset huts connected by tunnels you crawled through, on your knees." She stuck out a square hand. "I hope you enjoy being groundhogs again, I honestly do. Hot jets, good luck, and a safe landing."

Back in the lift, Josephine sputtered. "'Groundhogs' indeed! Just because we prefer our native planet, where a person can draw a breath of fresh air-"

"You use the term," Allan pointed out.

"But I use it about people who've never been off Terra."

"We've both said more than once that we wished we had had sense enough never to have left Earth. We're groundhogs at heart, Jo."

"Yes, but- Oh, Allan, you're being obnoxious. This is the happiest day of my life. Aren't you glad to be going home? Aren't you?"

"Of course I am. It'll be great to be back. Horseback riding. Skiing."

"And opera. Real, live grand opera. Allan, we've simply got to have a week or two in Manhattan before we go to the country."

"I thought you wanted to feel rain on your face."

"I want that, too. I want it all at once and I can't wait. Oh, darling, it's like getting out of jail." She clung to him.

He unwound her as the lift stopped. "Don't blubber."

"Allan, you're a beast," she said dreamily. "I'm so happy." They stopped again, in bankers' row. The clerk in the National City Bank office had their transfer of account ready. "Going home, eh? Just sign there, and your print. I envy you. Hunting, fishing."

"Surf bathing is more my style. And sailing."

"I," said Jo, "simply want to see green trees and blue sky." The clerk nodded. "I know what you mean. It's long ago and far away. Well, have fun. Are you taking three months or six?"

"We're not coming back," Allan stated flatly. "Three years of living like a fish in an aquarium is enough."

"So?" The clerk shoved the papers toward him and added without expression, "Well-hot jets."

"Thanks." They went on up to the subsurface level and took the cross-town slidewalk out to the rocket port. The slidewalk tunnel broke the surface at one point, becoming a pressurized shed; a view window on the west looked out on the surface of the Moon-and, beyond the hills, the Earth.

The sight of it, great and green and bountiful, against, the black lunar sky and harsh, unwinking stars, brought quick tears to Jo's eyes. Home-that lovely planet was hers! Allan looked at it more casually, noting the Greenwich. The sunrise Line had just touched South America-must be about eight twenty; better hurry.

They stepped off the slidewalk into the arms of some of their friends, waiting to see them off. "Hey-where have you Lugs been? The Gremlin blasts off in seven minutes."

"But we aren't going in it," MacRae answered. "No, siree."

"What? Not going? Did you change your minds?"

Josephine laughed. "Pay no attention to him, Jack. We're going in the express instead; we swapped reservations. So we've got twenty minutes yet."

"Well! A couple of rich tourists, eh?"

"Oh, the extra fare isn't so much and I didn't want to make two changes and spend a week in space when we could be home in two days." She rubbed her bare middle significantly.

"She can't take free flight, Jack," her husband explained.

"Well, neither can I - I was sick the whole trip out. Still, I don't think you'll be sick, Jo; you're used to Moon weight now."

"Maybe," she agreed, "but there is a lot of difference between one-sixth gravity and no gravity."

Jack Crail's wife cut in. "Josephine MacRae, are you going to risk your life in an atomic-powered ship?"

"Why not, darling? You work in an atomics laboratory."

"Hummph! In the laboratory we take precautions. The Commerce Commission should never have licensed the expresses. I may be old-fashioned, but I'll go back the way I came, via Terminal and Supra-New York, in good old reliable fuel-rockets."

"Don't try to scare her, Emma," Crail objected. "They've worked the bugs out of those ships."

"Not to my satisfaction. I-"

"Never mind," Allan interrupted her. "The matter is settled, and we've still got to get over to the express launching site. Good-by, everybody! Thanks for the send-off. It's been grand knowing you. If you come back to God's country, look us up."

"Good-by, kids!" "Good-by, Jo-good-by, Allan." "Give my regards to Broadway!" "So long-be sure to write." "Good-by." "Aloha-hot jets!" They showed their tickets, entered the air lock, and climbed into the pressurized shuttle between Leyport proper and the express launching site. "Hang on, 'folks," the shuttle operator called back over his shoulder; Jo and Allan hurriedly settled into the cushions. The lock opened; the tunnel ahead was airless. Five minutes later they were climbing out twenty miles away, beyond the hills that shielded the lid of Luna City from the radioactive splash of the express ships.

In the Sparrowhawk they shared a compartment with a missionary family. The Reverend Doctor Simmons felt obliged to explain why he was traveling in luxury. "It's for the child," he told them, as his wife strapped the baby girl into a small acceleration couch rigged stretcher-fashion between her parents' couches. "Since she's never been in space, we daren't take a chance of her being sick for days on end." They all strapped down at the warning siren. Jo felt her heart begin to pound. At last ... at long last!

The jets took hold, mashing them into the cushions. Jo had not known she could feel so heavy. This was worse, much worse, than the trip out. The baby cried as long as acceleration lasted, in wordless terror and discomfort.

After an interminable time they were suddenly weightless, as the ship went into free flight. When the terrible binding weight was free

of her chest, Jo's heart felt as light as her body. Allan threw off his upper strap and sat up. "How do you feel, kid?"

"Oh, I feel fine!" Jo unstrapped and faced him. Then she hiccoughed. "That is, I think I do."

Five minutes later she was not in doubt; she merely wished to die. Allan swam out of the compartment and located the ship's surgeon, who gave her an injection. Allan waited until she had succumbed to the drug, then left for the lounge to try his own cure for spacesickness - Mothersill's Seasick Remedy washed down with champagne. Presently he had to admit that these two sovereign remedies did not work for him-or perhaps he should not have mixed them.

Little Gloria Simmons was not spacesick. She thought being weightless was fun, and went bouncing off floorplate, overhead, and bulkhead like a dimpled balloon. Jo feebly considered strangling the child, if she floated within reach-but it was too much effort.

Deceleration, logy as it made them feel, was welcome relief after nausea-except to little Gloria. She cried again, in fear and hurt, while her mother tried to explain. Her father prayed.

After a long, long time came a slight jar and the sound of the siren. Jo managed to raise her head. "What's the matter? Is there an accident?"

"I don't think so. I think we've landed."

'We can't have! We're still braking-I'm heavy as lead."

Allan grinned feebly. "So am I. Earth gravity-remember?"

The baby continued to cry.

They said good-by to the missionary family, as Mrs. Simmons decided to wait for a stewardess from the skyport. The MacRaes staggered out of the ship, supporting each other. "It can't be just the gravity," Jo protested, her feet caught in invisible quicksand. "I've taken Earth-normal acceleration in the centrifuge at the 'Y', back home-I mean back in Luna City. We're weak from spacesickness."

Allan steadied himself. "That's it. We haven't eaten anything for two days."

"Allan-didn't you eat anything either?'

"No. Not permanently, so tospy. Are you hungry?"

"Starving."

"How about dinner at Kean's Chophouse?"

"Wonderful. Oh, Allan, we're back!" Her tears started again.

They glimpsed the Simmonses once more, after chuting down the

Hudson Valley and into Grand Central Station. While they were waiting at the tube dock for their bag, Jo saw the Reverend Doctor climb heavily out of the next tube capsule, carrying his daughter and followed by his wife. He set the child down carefully. Gloria stood for a moment, trembling on her pudgy legs, then collapsed to the dock. She lay there, crying thinly.

A spaceman-pilot, by his uniform-stopped and looked pityingly at the child. "Born in the Moon?" he asked.

"Why yes, she was, sir." Simmons' courtesy transcended his troubles.

"Pick her up and carry her. She'll have to learn to walk all over again." The spaceman shook his head sadly and glided away. Simmons looked still more troubled, then sat down on the dock beside his child, careless of the dirt.

Jo felt too weak to help. She looked around for Allan, but he was busy; their bag had arrived. It was placed at his feet and he started to pick it up, and then felt suddenly silly. It seemed nailed to the dock. He knew what was in it, rolls of microfilm and colorfilm, a few souvenirs, toilet articles, various irreplaceables-fifty pounds of mass. It couldn't weigh what it seemed to.

But it did. He had forgotten what fifty pounds weigh on Earth.

"Porter, mister?' The speaker was grey-haired and thin, but he scooped up the bag quite casually. Allan called out, "Come along, Jo." and followed him, feeling foolish. The porter slowed to match Allan's labored steps.

"Just down from the Moon?" he asked.

"Why, yes."

"Got a reservation?"

"No."

"You stick with me. I've got a friend on the desk at the Commodore." He led them to the Concourse slidewalk and thence to the hotel.

They were too weary to dine out; Allan had dinner sent to their room. Afterward, Jo fell asleep in a hot tub and he had trouble getting her out-she liked the support the water gave her. But he persuaded her that a rubber-foam mattress was nearly as good. They got to sleep very early.

She woke up, struggling, about four in the morning. "Allan. Allan!"

"Huh? What's the matter?" His hand fumbled at the light switch.

"Uh . . . nothing I guess. I dreamed I was back in the ship. The jets

had run away with her. Allan, what makes it so stuffy in here? I've got a splitting headache."

"Huh? It can't be stuffy. This joint is air-conditioned." He sniffed the air. "I've got a headache, too," he admitted.

"Well, do something. Open a window."

He stumbled out of bed, shivered when the outer air hit him, and hurried back under the covers. He was wondering whether he could get to sleep with the roar of the city pouring in through the window when his wife spoke again. "Allan?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Honey, I'm cold. May I crawl in with you?"

"Sure."

The sunlight streamed in the window, warm and mellow. When it touched his eyes, he woke and found his wife awake beside him. She sighed and snuggled. "Oh, darling, look! Blue sky-we're home. I'd forgotten how lovely it is."

"It's great to be back, all right. How do you feel?"

"Much better. How are you?"

"Okay, I guess." He pushed off the covers.

Jo squealed and jerked them back. "Don't do that!"

"Huh?"

"Mama's great big boy is going to climb out and close that window while mamma stays here under the covers."

"Well-all right." He could walk more easily than the night before-but it was good to get back into bed. Once there, he faced the telephone and shouted, at it, "Service!"

"Order, please," it answered in a sweet contralto.

"Orange juice and coffee for two-extra coffee-six eggs, scrambled medium, and whole-wheat toast. And send up a Times, and the Saturday Evening Post."

"Ten minutes."

"Thank you." The delivery cupboard buzzed while he was shaving. He answered it and served Jo breakfast in bed. Breakfast over, he laid down his newspaper and said, "Can you pull your nose out of that magazine?"

"Glad to. The darn thing is too big and heavy to hold."

"Why don't you have the stat edition mailed to you from Luna City? Wouldn't cost more than eight or nine times as much."

"Don't be silly. What's on your mind?"

"How about climbing out of that frosty little nest and going with me to shop for clothes?"

"Uh-uh. No, I am not going outdoors in a moonsuit."

"'Fraid of being stared at? Getting prudish in your old age?"

"No, me lord, I simply refuse to expose myself to the outer air in six ounces of nylon and a pair of sandals. I want some warm clothes first." She squirmed further down under the covers.

"The Perfect Pioneer Woman. Going to have fitters sent up?"

"We can't afford that. Look - you're going anyway. Buy me just any old rag so long as it's warm."

MacRae looked stubborn. "I've tried shopping for you before."

"Just this once - please. Run over to Saks and pick out a street dress in a blue wool jersey, size ten. And a pair of nylons."

"Well-all right."

"That's a lamb. I won't be loafing. I've a list as long as your arm of people I've promised to call up, look 'up, have lunch with."

He attended to his own shopping first; his sensible shorts and singlet seemed as warm as a straw hat in a snowstorm. It was not really cold and was quite balmy in the sun, but it seemed cold to a man used to a never-failing seventy-two degrees. He tried to stay underground, or stuck to the roofed-over section of Fifth Avenue.

He suspected that the salesmen had outfitted him in clothes that made him look like a yokel But they were warm. They were also heavy; they added to the pain across his chest and made him walk even more unsteadily. He wondered how long it would be before he got his ground-legs.

A motherly saleswoman took care of Jo's order and sold him a warm cape for her as well. He headed back, stumbling under his packages, and trying futilely to flag a ground-taxi. Everyone seemed in such a hurry! Once he was nearly knocked down by a teen-aged boy who said, "Watch it, Gramps!" and rushed off, before he could answer.

He got back, aching all over and thinking about a hot bath. He did not get it; Jo had a visitor. "Mrs. Appleby, my husband-Allan, this is Emma Crail's mother."

"Oh, how do you do, Doctor-or should it be 'Professor'?"

"Mister-"

"-when I heard you were in town I just couldn't wait to hear all about my poor darling. How is she? Is she thin? Does she look well? These modern girls-I've told her time and again that she must get out of doors-I walk in the Park every day-and look at me. She sent me a

picture-I have it here somewhere; at least I think I have-and she doesn't look a bit well, undernourished. Those synthetic foods-"

"She doesn't eat synthetic foods, Mrs. Appleby."

"-must be quite impossible, I'm sure, not to mention the taste. What were you saying?'

"Your daughter doesn't live on synthetic foods," Allan repeated. "Fresh fruits and vegetables are one thing we have almost too much of in Luna City. The air-conditioning plant, you know."

"That's just what I was saying. I confess I don't see just how you get food out of air-conditioning machinery on the Moon-"

"In the Moon, Mrs. Appleby."

"-but it can't be healthy. Our air-conditioner at home is always breaking down and making the most horrible smells - simply unbearable, my dears-you'd think they could build a simple little thing like an air-conditioner so that-though of course if you expect them to manufacture synthetic foods as well-" "Mm. Appleby-"

"Yes, Doctor? What were you saying? Don't let me-"

"Mrs. Appleby," MacRae said desperately, "the airconditioning plant in Luna City is a hydroponic farm, tanks of growing plants, green things. The plants take the carbon dioxide out of the air and put oxygen back in."

"But- Are you quite sure, Doctor? I'm sure Emma said-"

"Quite sure."

"Well . . . I don't pretend to understand these things, I'm the artistic type. Poor Herbert often said-Herbert was Emma's father; simply wrapped up in his engineering though I always saw to it that he heard good music and saw the reviews of the best books. Emma takes after her father, I'm afraid-I do wish she would give up that silly work she is in. Hardly the sort of work for a woman, do you think, Mrs. MacRae? All those atoms and neuters and things floating around in the air. I read all about it in the Science Made Simple column in the-"

"She's quite good at it and she seems to like it."

"Well, yes, I suppose. That's the important thing, to be happy at what you are doing no matter how silly it is. But I worry about the child-buried away from civilization, no one of her own sort to talk to, no theaters, no cultural life, no society-"

"Luna City has stereo transcriptions of every successful Broadway play." Jo's voice had a slight edge.

"Oh! Really? But it's not just going to the theater, my dear; it's the

society of gentlefolk. Now when I was a girl, my parents-"

Allan butted in, loudly. "One o'clock. Have you had lunch, my dear?'

Mrs. Appleby sat up with a jerk. "Oh, heavenly days - I simply must fly. My dress designer-such a tyrant, but a genius; I must give you her address. It's been charming, my dears, and I can't thank you too much for telling me all about my poor darling. I do wish she would be sensible like you two; she knows I'm always ready to make a home for her-and her husband, for that matter. Now do come and see me, often. I love to talk to people who've been on the Moon-"

"In the Moon."

"It makes me feel closer to my darling. Good-by, then."

With the door locked behind her, Jo said, "Allan, I need a drink."

"I'll join you."

Jo cut her shopping short; it was too tiring. By four o'clock they were driving in Central Park, enjoying fall scenery to the lazy clop-clop of home's hoofs. The helicopters, the pigeons, the streak in the sky where the Antipodes rocket had passed, made a scene idyllic in beauty and serenity. Jo swallowed a lump in her throat and whispered, "Allan, isn't it beautiful?"

"Sure is. It's great to be back. Say, did you notice they've torn up 42nd Street again?"

Back in their room, Jo collapsed on her bed, while Allan took off his shoes. He sat, rubbing his feet, and remarked, "I'm going barefooted all evening. Golly, how my feet hurt!"

"So do mine. But we're going to your father's, my sweet."

"Huh? Oh, damn, I forgot. Jo, whatever possessed you? Call him up and postpone it. We're still half dead from the trip."

"But, Allan, he's invited a lot of your friends."

"Balls of fire and cold mush! I haven't any real friends in New York. Make it next week."

"'Next week' . . . hmm . . . look, Allan, let's go out to the country right away." Jo's parents had left her a tiny place in Connecticut, a worn-out farm.

"I thought you wanted a couple of weeks of plays and music first. Why the sudden change?"

"I'll show you." She went to the window, open since noon. "Look at that window sill." She drew their initials in the grime. "Allan, this city

is filthy."

"You can't expect ten million people not to kick up dust."

"But we're breathing that stuff into our lungs. What's happened to the smog-control laws?'

"That's not smog; that's normal city dirt."

"Luna City was never like this. I could wear a white outfit there till I got tired of it. One wouldn't last a day here."

"Manhattan doesn't have a roof-and precipitrons in every air duct."

"Well, it should have. I either freeze or suffocate."

"I thought you were anxious to feel rain on your face?'

"Don't be tiresome. I want it out in the clean, green country."

"Okay. I want to start my book anyhow. I'll call your real estate agent."

"I called him this morning. We can move in anytime; he started fixing up the place when he got my letter."

It was a stand-up supper at his father's home though Jo sat down at once and let food be fetched. Allan wanted to sit down, but his status as guest of honor forced him to stay on his aching feet. His father buttonholed him at the buffet. "Here, son, try this goose liver. It ought to go well after a diet of green cheese."

Allan agreed that it was good.

"See here, son, you really ought to tell these folks about your trip."

"No speeches, Dad. Let 'em read the National Geographic."

"Nonsense!" He turned around. "Quiet, everybody! Allan is going to tell us how the Lunatics live."

Allan bit his lip. To be sure, the citizens of Luna City used the term to each other, but it did not sound the same here. "Well, really, I haven't anything to say. Go on and eat."

"You talk and we'll eat." "Tell us about Looney City." "Did you see the Man-in-the-Moon?" "Go on, Allan, what's it like to live on the Moon?"

"Not 'on the Moon'-in the Moon."

"What's the difference?"

"Why, none, I guess." He hesitated; there was really no way to explain why the Moon colonists emphasized that they lived under the surface of the satellite planet-but it irritated him the way "Frisco" irritates a San Franciscan. "'In the Moon' is the way we say it. We don't spend much time on the surface, except for the staff at Richardson Observatory, and the prospectors, and so forth. The living quarters are underground, naturally."

"Why 'naturally'? Afraid of meteors?"

"No more than you are afraid of lightning. We go underground for insulation against heat and cold and as support for pressure sealing. Both are cheaper and easier underground. The soil is easy to work and the interstices act like vacuum in a thermos bottle. It is vacuum."

"But Mr. MacRae," a serious-looking lady inquired, "doesn't it hurt your ears to live under pressure?'

Allan fanned the air. "It's the same pressure here-fifteen pounds."

She looked puzzled, then said, "Yes, I suppose so, but it is a little hard to imagine. I think it would terrify me to be sealed up in a cave. Suppose you had a blow-out?"

"Holding fifteen pounds pressure is no problem; engineers work in thousands of pounds per square inch. Anyhow, Luna City is compartmented like a ship. It's safe enough. The Dutch live behind dikes; down in Mississippi they have levees. Subways, ocean liners, aircraft-they're all artificial ways of living. Luna City seems strange just because it's far away."

She shivered. "It scares me."

A pretentious little man pushed his way forward. "Mr. MacRae-granted that it is nice for science and all that, why should taxpayers' money be wasted on a colony on the Moon?"

"You seem to have answered yourself," Allan told him slowly.

"Then how do you justify it? Tell me that, sir."

"It isn't necessary to justify it; the Lunar colony has paid for itself several times over. The Lunar corporations are all paying propositions. Artemis Mines, Spaceways, Spaceways Provisioning Corporation, Diana Recreations, Electronics Research Company, Lunar Biological Labs, not to mention all of Rutherford - look 'em up. I'll admit the Cosmic Research Project nicks the taxpayer a little, since it's a joint enterprise of the Harriman Foundation and the government."

"Then you admit it. It's the principle of the thing."

Allan's feet were hurting him very badly indeed. "What principle? Historically, research has always paid off." He turned his back and looked for some more goose liver.

A man touched him on the arm; Allan recognized an old schoolmate. "Allan, old boy, congratulations on the way you ticked off old Beetle. He's been needing it-I think he's some sort of a radical."

Allan grinned. "I shouldn't have lost my temper."

"A good job you did. Say, Allan, I'm going to take a couple of out-of-town buyers around to the hot spots tomorrow night. Come along."

"Thanks a lot, but we're going out in the country."

"Oh, you can't afford to miss this party. After all, you've been buried on the Moon; you owe yourself some relaxation after that deadly monotony."

Allan felt his cheeks getting warm. "Thanks just the same, but-ever seen the Earth View Room in Hotel Moon Haven?'

"No. Plan to take the trip when I've made my pile, of course.'"

"Well, there's a night club for you. Ever see a dancer leap thirty feet into the air and do slow rolls, on the way down? Ever try a lunacy cocktail? Ever see a juggler work in low gravity?" Jo caught his eye across the room. "Er . . . excuse me, old man. My wife wants me." He turned away, then flung back over his shoulder, "Moon Haven itself isn't just a spaceman's dive, by the way-it's recommended by the Duncan Hines Association."

Jo was very pale. "Darling, you've got to get me out of here. I'm suffocating. I'm really ill."

"Suits." They made their excuses.

Jo woke up with a stuffy cold, so they took a cab directly to her country place. There were low-lying clouds under them, but the weather was fine above. The sunshine and the drowsy beat of the rotors regained for them the joy of homecoming,

Allan broke the lazy reverie. "Here's a funny thing, Jo. You couldn't hire me to go back to the Moon-but last night I found myself defending the Loonies every time I opened my mouth."

She nodded. "I know. Honest to Heaven, Allan, some people act as if the Earth were flat. Some of them don't really believe in anything, and some of them are so matter-of-fact that you know they don't really understand-and I don't know which sort annoys me the more."

It was foggy when they landed, but the house was clean, the agent had laid a fire and had stocked the refrigerator. They were sipping hot punch and baking the weariness out of their bones' within ten minutes after the copter grounded. "This," said Allan, stretching, "is all right. It really is great to be back."

"Uh-huh. All except the highway." A new express and freight superhighway now ran not fifty yards from the house. They could hear the big diesels growling as they struck the grade.

"Forget the highway. Turn your back and you stare straight into the woods."

They regained their ground-legs well enough to enjoy short walks

in the woods; they were favored with a long, warm Indian summer; the cleaning woman was efficient and taciturn. Allan worked on the results of three years research preparatory to starting his book. Jo helped him with the statistical work, got reacquainted with the delights of cooking, dreamed, and rested.

It was the day of the first frost that the toilet stopped up.

The village plumber was persuaded to show up the next day. Meanwhile they resorted to a homely little building, left over from another era and still standing out beyond the woodpile. It was spider-infested and entirely too well ventilated.

The plumber was not encouraging. "New septic tank. New sewer pipe. Pay you to get new fixtures at the same time. Fifteen, sixteen hundred dollars. Have to do some calculating."

"That's all right," Allan told him. "Can you start today?'

The man laughed. "I can see plainly, Mister, that you don't know what it is to get materials and labor these days. Next spring--soon as the frost is out of the ground."

"That's impossible, man. Never mind the cost. Get it done."

The native shrugged. "Sorry not to oblige you. Good day." When he left, Jo exploded. "Allan, he doesn't want to help us."

"Well-maybe. I'll try to get someone from Norwalk, or even from the City. You can't trudge through the snow out to that Iron Maiden all winter."

"I hope not."

"You must not. You've already had one cold." He stared morosely at the fire. "I suppose I brought it on by my misplaced sense of humor."

"How?"

"Well, you know how we've been subjected to steady kidding ever since it got noised around that we were colonials. I haven't minded much, but some of it rankled. You remember I went into the village by myself last Saturday?"

"Yes. What happened?"

"They started in on me in the barbershop. I let it ride at first, then the worm turned. I started talking about the Moon, sheer double-talk--corny old stuff like the vacuum worms and the petrified air. It was some time before they realized I was ribbing them-and when they did, nobody laughed. Our friend the rustic sanitary engineer was one of the group. I'm sorry."

"Don't be." She kissed him. "If I have to tramp through the snow, it

will cheer me that you gave them back some of their sass."

The plumber from Norwalk was more helpful, but rain, and then sleet, slowed down the work. They both caught colds. On the ninth miserable day Allan was working at his desk when he heard Jo come in the back door, returning from a shopping trip. He turned back to his work, then presently became aware that she had not come in to say "hello." He went to investigate.

He found her collapsed on a kitchen chair, crying quietly. "Darling," he said urgently, "honey baby, whatever is the matter?"

She looked up. "I didn't bead to led you doe."

"Blow your nose. Then wipe your eyes. What do you mean, 'you didn't mean to let me know'. What happened?"

She let it out, punctuated with her handkerchief. First, the grocer had said he had no cleansing tissues; then, when she pointed to them, had stated that they were "sold". Finally, he had mentioned "bringing outside labor into town and taking the bread out of the mouths of honest folk".

Jo had blown up and had rehashed the incident of Allan and the barbershop wits. The grocer had simply grown more stiff. "'Lady,' he said to me, 'I don't know whether you and your husband have been to the Moon or not, and I don't care. I don't take much stock in such things. In any case, I don't need your trade.' Oh, Allan, I'm so unhappy."

"Not as unhappy as he's going to be! Where's my hat?"

"Allan! You're not leaving this house. I won't have you fighting."

"I won't have him bullying you."

"He won't again. Oh my dear, I've tried so hard, but I can't stay here any longer. It's not just the villagers; it's the cold and the cockroaches and always having, a runny nose. I'm tired out and my feet hurt all the time." She started to cry again.

"There, there! We'll leave, honey. We'll go to Florida. I'll finish my book while you lie in the sun."

"Oh, I don't want to go to Florida. I want to go home."

"Huh? You mean-back to Luna City?"

"Yes. Oh, dearest, I know you don't want to, but I can't stand it any longer. It's not just the dirt and the cold and the comic-strip plumbing-it's not being understood. It wasn't any better in New York. These groundhogs don't know anything."

He grinned at her. "Keep sending, kid; I'm on your frequency."

"Allan!"

He nodded. "I found out I was a Loony at heart quite a while ago- but I was afraid to tell you. My feet hurt, too- and I'm damn sick of being treated like a freak. I've tried to be tolerant, but I can't stand groundhogs. I miss the folks in dear old Luna. They're civilized."

She nodded. "I guess it's prejudice, but I feel the same way."

"It's not prejudice. Let's be honest. What does it take to get to Lana City?"

"A ticket."

"Smarty pants. I don't mean as a tourist; I mean to get a job there. You know the answer: Intelligence. It costs a lot to send a man to the Moon and more to keep him there. To pay off, he has to be worth a lot. High I.Q., good compatibility index, superior education-everything that makes a person pleasant and easy and interesting to have around. We've been spoiled; the ordinary human cussedness that groundhogs take for granted, we now find intolerable, because Loonies are different. The fact that Luna City is the most comfortable environment man ever built for himself is beside the point-it's the people who count. Let's go home."

He went to the telephone-an old-fashioned, speech-only rig-and called the Foundation's New York office. While he was waiting, truncheon-like "receiver" to his ear, she said, "Suppose they won't have us?"

"That's what worries me." They knew that the Lunar companies rarely rehired personnel who had once quit; the physical examination was reputed to be much harder the second time.

"Hello . . . hello. Foundation? May I speak to the recruiting office? . . . hello-I can't turn on my view plate; this instrument is a hangover from the dark ages. This is Allan MacRae, physical chemist, contract number 1340729. And my wife, Josephine MacRae, 1340730. We want to sign up again. I said we wanted to sign up again . . . okay, I'll wait."

"Pray, darling, pray!"

"I'm praying- How's that! My appointment's still vacant? Fine, fine! How about my wife?" He listened with a worried look; Jo held her breath. Then he cupped the speaker. "Hey, Jo-your job's filled. They want to know if you'll take an interim job as a junior accountant?"

"Tell 'em 'yes!'"

"That'll be fine. When can we take our exams? That's fine, thanks. Good-by." He hung up and turned to his wife. "Physical and psycho as soon as we like; professional exams waived."

"What are we waiting for?"

"Nothing." He dialed the Norwalk Copter Service. "Can you run us into Manhattan? Well, good grief, don't you have radar? All right, all right, g'by!" He snorted. "Cabs all grounded by the weather. I'll call New York and try to get a modern cab."

Ninety minutes later they landed on top of Harriman Tower.

The psychologist was very cordial. "Might as well get this over before you have your chests thumped. Sit down. Tell me about yourselves." He drew them out, nodding from time to time. "I see. Did you ever get the plumbing repaired?"

"Well, it was being fixed."

"I can sympathize with your foot trouble, Mrs. MacRae; my arches always bother me here. That's your real reason, isn't it?"

"Oh, no!"

"Now, Mrs. MacRae-"

"Really it's not---truly. I want people to talk to who know what I mean. All that's really wrong with me is that I'm homesick for my own sort. I want to go home-and I've got to have this job to get there. - I'll steady down, I know I will."

The doctor looked grave. "How about you, Mr. MacRae?"

"Well-it's about the same story. I've been trying to write a book, but I can't work. I'm homesick. I want to go back."

Feldman suddenly smiled. "It won't be too difficult."

"You mean we're in? If we pass the physical?"

"Never mind the physical-your discharge examinations are recent enough. Of course you'll have to go out to Arizona for reconditioning and quarantine. You're probably wondering why it seems so easy when it is supposed to be so hard. It's really simple: We don't want people lured back by the high pay. We do want people who will be happy and as permanent as possible-in short, we want people who think of Luna City as 'home.' Now that you're 'Moonstruck,' we want you back." He stood up and shoved out his hand.

Back in the Commodore that night, Jo was struck by a thought. "Allan-do you suppose we could get our own apartment back?"

"Why, I don't know. We could send old lady Stone a radio."

"Call her up instead, Allan. We can afford it."

"All right! I will!"

It took about ten minutes to get the circuit through. Miss Stone's face looked a trifle less grim when she recognized them.

"Miss Stone, we're coming home!"

There was the usual three-second lag, then-"Yes, I know. It came over the tape about twenty minutes ago."

"Oh. Say, Miss Stone, is our old apartment vacant?" They waited.

"I've held it; I knew you'd come back-after a bit. Welcome home, Loonies."

When the screen cleared, Jo said, "What did she mean, Allan?"

"Looks like we're in, kid. Members of the Lodge."

"I guess so-oh, Allan, look!" She had stepped to the window; scudding clouds had just uncovered the Moon. It was three days old and Mare Fecunditatis-the roll of hair at the back of the Lady-in-the-Moon's head-was cleared by the Sunrise line. Near the right-hand edge of that great, dark "sea" was a tiny spot, visible only to their inner eyes-Luna City.

The crescent hung, serene and silvery, over the tall buildings. "Darling, isn't it beautiful?"

"Certainly is. It'll be great to be back. Don't get your nose all runny."